22 1946

Armenian Presbyterian Church

# Directory of Armenians



Washington, D. C.
Richmond, Va.
Baltimore, Md.

1944-1945

To Dr. William Walker Rockwell,
one of the few very best friends the
author and compiler ever had, with
sincere compliments,
Charles Yrjakian Vartanes

*Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed; for the Lord thy God is with thee withersoever thou goest.—Joshua* 1:9.

# Directory of Armenians

in

Washington, D. C.
Richmond, Va.
Baltimore, Md.



Published by the
Armenian Presbyterian Church
Washington, D. C.

1944 1945

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# PREFACE

In 1941 the Armenian Presbyterian Church of Washington, D. C. published a *Directory of Armenians in Washington, D.C. and Vicinity.* It consisted of a twenty-page booklet of names, addresses and advertisements. The present work is the second edition of that Directory. It consists of 68 pages, and has many added features. It includes advertisements from Richmond; the names and addresses of Armenians in Richmond and Baltimore; the business addresses and telephone numbers[1] of individuals, when these are known; brief passages from the scriptures and inspired literature; lists of the executive bodies of the various Armenian organizations in Washington and Richmond; and the histories of the Armenian communities in Washington and Richmond. These histories constitute the most unique feature of the new Directory.

The present work would have been impossible without the cooperation and generous contributions of the Directory Committee,[2] sponsors,[3] the advertisers, those who furnished the data for histories, our friends and subscribers who will yet contribute to the project, and several other individuals.

In Richmond Miss Bektemerian, Mrs. O'Hanessian, and especially Miss Virginia Moughamian and Mr. Vahan Ghazarian were helpful. In Washington Mrs. Sara M. Aznakian gave her time and energy unstintingly to help edit the manuscript and prepare it for the printer.

The brief history of the Richmond Armenians is based on information secured from Messrs. Abraham Krikorian, Krikor Magarian, and Manouk Baronian.

The history of the Washington Armenians is based on the Minutes of the Session and Congregation and the Minutes of the Ladies Aid Society of the Armenian Presbyterian Church; data from the Minutes of the Washington Chapter of the Armenian General Benevolent Union, secured through Mrs. Ephronia Manookian; the Washington City Directory for the years 1885 to 1910; and information given by Mr. Nejib Hekimian, Mr. Aram Casparian, Mrs. Louise Nazarian, Dr. M. Dolmage, Mr. A. Malkhas, Mrs. Mary Maranian, Mr. Nazaret Caroglanian, and Mrs. Vartanoush Karibian. To all these and many others we extend our sincere appreciation for the generous help they gave in the preparation of this history.

In writing the history of the Washington Armenians especially no time or effort was spared in the interest of accuracy. Nevertheless, the writer cannot

[1] The first address and telephone number listed for an individual or family is that of the home; the second is that of the business.
[2] See page 5 for the lists of the members of these committees.
[3] See page 5 for the list.

vouch that the job is free from error, in view of the fact that a great deal of the information secured was from memory. The study cannot be regarded completed until more documents, such as passports, old letters, family Bibles, newspapers and periodicals, are consulted. The same is true for the Richmond story. It is the desire of the writer to revise and even enlarge these two studies at some future date. He will appreciate any information which will further this end.

The writer believes that no satisfactory history of the migration of the Armenians to the United States and their ultimate assimilation can be written until the stories of local Armenian communities in various parts of the country are first set down by men who are interested in objective historical research. We hope to make our studies of the Armenians in Washington and Richmond a worthwhile source for that more inclusive history, when it is written.

We urge Armenians everywhere to write the story of their respective communities with a view that what they write now may later become the basis of that more inclusive history. This should be done while old timers can give the needed basic information.

Our sincere appreciation to all those who, by giving unstintingly of their time and means, helped to make this second edition of the *Directory* a success.

Charles Y. Aznakian

## The Directory Committee

Charles Y. Aznakian, *ex-officio*

### Members in Washington, D. C.

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Edward Baboyan
Souren Hanessian
Albert Krikorian
George Manougian
Jacob Tossounian
Edward Turmanian

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Ephronia Manookian
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Louis Melikian
George Nazarian
Hrandt Norair
John Parsekian
Jacob H. Poladian
Nishan Shamigian
Arshavir Shavarshoony
Jacob Tossounian
Levon Tourian
Edward Turmanian

*Washington, D. C.*

★ ★ ★

# Honor Roll of Servicemen from Washington, D. C

Misak Adourian
Edward H. Adzigian
Benjamin Babashanian, Jr
Jack Babashanian
John Baker
Astor Balian
Mark Bjishkian
Harry Boudaghian
Artin Brown
Peter Chorbajian
Ardzvig V. Gadarian
Haig V. Gadarian
Rouben Gavoor
Henry Hartunian
Norris Hekimian
Manuel Hovnanian
Puzant Jeryan
James Keshishian
John Keshishian
Norman Krikorian
Enoch Lachinian
Armen Loosararian
Edward Manookian
Robert Meldonian
Ara Mesrobian
J. N. Mesrobian
Raffi Mesrobian
George Missakian
Ara Nersessian
Philip O'Gulian
J. Steven Paul
George Semerjian
Carnig Terzian
J. Tomasian
Richard Tossounian
Vahack Vartanian

★ ★ ★

# A Brief History of the Armenian Community in Washington, D. C.

*The Earliest Settlers*

The settlement of the Armenians in Washington, D. C. may be said to have started around 1887 with the coming of Dicran K. Varzhabedian. His name appears in the *Washington City Directory* for 1888 as a dealer in Turkish goods at 620 14th Street, N. W. According to one of our sources he had come to the United States from Persia with the intention of studying; and that while he was a student Hovhannes Tavshanjian, the great rug dealer in New York, supplied him with stock and set him up in the rug business in the city of Washington. For a while Varzhabedian seems to have prospered. In 1890 or thereabouts he expanded his business under the name of D. K. Varzhabedian and Company, and opened a second store at 1022 Connecticut Avenue. The Company was advertised as "importers and dealers in Turkish, Japanese and Oriental goods."[1]

Within the next few years, however, Varzhabedian seems to have run into reverses. First he gave up one of his stores; then he moved his place of business twice;[2] and finally, in the Knox Fire of July 1894 he is said to have lost everything. After that he left the city;[3] but returned in 1898 or thereabouts, and worked as "manager" of the Varzhabedian Rug Company, at 612 12th Street, N. W.[4] M. Dolmage saw Varzhabedian at this time, and describes him as a short man with a goatee beard. Apparently his business on 12th Street did not last a year.[5] According to one of our sources Tavshanjian sent him to Persia as a buyer of rugs.

Varzhabedian seems to have been a well educated and well-liked person He is said to have helped in a revision of Edward Fitzgerald's translation of the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam. He made many friends among the prominent citizens of Washington, some of whom still cherish his memory.

About the time Varzhabedian came to Washington a Russian Armenian by the name of Mulanoff appears to have settled in the city. In 1897 he sold to the Hovsepian family[6] a restaurant business which he is said to have operated for about ten years.

The third Armenian known to have settled in the city was Boghos Casbarian. He came around 1895 from Missis, near Adana, Turkey, where he had been a teacher of the Protestant school. He had also served as a monitor at Anatolia

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[1] See *Washington City Directory* for 1891.
[2] *Ibid.*, 1893, 1894, 1895.
[3] He is not listed in *ibid.*, 1896, 1897, and 1898.
[4] *Ibid.*, 1899.
[5] After 1899 neither his name nor the business under his name appears in *ibid.*
[6] *Infra*, p. 10

College in Marsovan. A missionary, then residing in Washington, whom he had known in the old country, seems to have been instrumental in his coming. Casbarian had his first employment with W. B. Moses as a rug repair man. In time he opened his own business, which soon came to be known as the Oriental Rug Repairing Company. About 1900 he moved to 511 12th Street, N. W.,[7] where he remained for thirty years.[8]

*Early Students*

During the closing years of the 19th century and the first decade of the 20th other Armenians came to Washington to study, to work, or to go into business. Most of them seem to have had good educational backgrounds.

The Hovsepain family, consisting of Mrs. Armaveny and her three sons came in 1897 to take over Mr. Mulanoff's restaurant. Armenag, the second son, entered George Washington University to study medicine. The other two sons did some work at the Corcoran Art Gallery. Hovsep, the youngest, later became a famous actor under the name of Arthur Edmund Crew. Ardashes, the eldest, has come to be known as a writer and worker in circles of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation under the name of Malkhas.

In 1899 the Hovsepians called Mihran Dolmage to come to Washington where, they said, he could pursue his professional studies in the evening and work during the day. Armenag himself was doing the same as "carpet sewer" and "clerk."[9] Dolmage came, worked for the Hovsepians for about five or six months, and entered the dental school of Georgetown University.

Dolmage himself was somewhat instrumental in the coming of Aram Garabedian[10] of Bursa, Turkey. Garabedian wrote to him from Switzerland for information concerning the dental school of Georgetown University. He had read Dolmage's name in a catalogue of this school. Dolmage encouraged him to come. Within a few months he was an enrolled student in the same school.

Hmayag Loosararian, a brother of Mrs. Mary Maranian, came to Washington as an intern at Garfield Hospital. He was a graduate of Aintab College in Turkey and of the Albany Medical College in New York. It is said that he practically lived in the Library of Congress.

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[7] *Washington City Directory* for 1897, 1898, 1901.
[8] According to his nephew, Mr. Aram Casbarian.
[9] *Washington City Directory* for 1899 and 1900.
[10] The brother of Ohan Garabedian and Mrs. Haigazian, the wife of the famous founder of Jenanian College in Konia, Turkey.

Nejib Hekimian is another of the early Armenian students in Washington. He won a four year scholarship for the study of medicine at George Washington University. He discontinued his studies there at the end of two years due to ill health.

What attracted these students to Washington were low tuition rates, liberal scholarships to foreign students, and evening courses in medicine and dentistry.

### *Early Rug Dealers*

Most of the Armenians who came to Washington between 1885 and 1910 who did not pursue studies made their start in the rug business. We have already referred to Varzhabedian and Casbarian. Within two years after Varzhabedian left the city Moses Hekimian came and opened a business as rug dealer at 1804 6th Streets, N.W. A year later he moved to another location with Julius Nazar (Kurkjian) as partner.[11] The partnership, however, did not last more than about two years,[12] perhaps because Nazar went to New York as an interpreter at Ellis Island. Nazar and Hekimian were brothers-in-law. It is possible they came to Washington together, and had been in business together earlier. Hekimian is said to have bought a cotton plantation in Georgia before coming to Washington, which failed as a venture, apparently during the Panic of 1893.

Both Hekimian and Nazar were interesting additions to Washington because of their large families and cultural backgrounds. Hekimian came with his wife, three sons and a daughter. Before coming to the United States he had been a student at Aintab College.

Nazar came with his wife, two sons and one daughter. Mrs. Nazar was a brilliant French Swiss of high attainments.[13] Nazar was one of the first graduates of Aintab College. He was also an M.D. from the American University in Beirut, Syria; and probably held other degrees from universities in Europe and the United States. Among his chief interests were philosophy, theology and agriculture. His father is said to have been fabulously rich. As far as the son was concerned, however, the pursuit of knowledge was the end of existence. Although a physician by training, he never practiced medicine. For a while he entertained the idea of going back to Turkey and introducing modern machinery in that country. To him his partnership with Moses Hekimian is said to have been of secondary importance; and that his main interest in coming to Washington was the Library of Congress.

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[11] *Washington City Directory* for 1901, 1902, 1903.
[12] *Ibid.*, 1904.
[13] After her husband left for New York she opened a private school of languages at 1636 15th Street, N.W., probably her home; and a year later secured a position as "public librarian," in which capacity she served for at least three years. *Washington City Directory*, 1904, 1905, 1906, 1907.

During the early years of the present century three other Armenians came to Washington who went into the rug business. They were Antranig Bakshian, Hagop Uncabablan, and Onnig Nersessian. They all had their start with W. B. Moses as rug repairmen. Bakshian and Uncababian established their own businesses in a short time, and attained conspicuous success.[14] Nersessian later had the concession for rug repairing at Woodward and Lothrop for many years.

*Employment and Business in Other Fields*

Among the early Armenian settlers in Washington there were also those who had their start in business or employment other than the rug line. In the field of dentistry Dolmage and Garabedian established practices after graduating from Georgetown University. For a while Dolmage also taught chemistry at his Alma Mater. Garabedian developed one of the best dental practices in the city, mostly among members of the foreign legations. Armenag Loosararian (Lewis), another brother of Mrs. Mary Maranian, who had attended Aintab College, studied in Chicago, Ill., and graduated from the Albany Medical School in New York, had his start as an employee of Liggett's Drug Store. Later he had his own store at 14th Street and Colorado Ave., N. W.

In the field of business or employment in general two names stand out. Avak Hagop Panossian, a graduate of the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, New York, came to Washington around 1902 as a surveyor for the Southern Railway, and while here pursued advanced courses in one of the universities. Sarkis Ichilian, who came from Paris, France, about 1904, opened a cigar store at 13th and G Streets, N. W.; then worked for Woodward and Lothrop; and later again went into business for himself. Avedis Maranian opened a grocery store at 1209 H Street, N. W., about 1908.[15] Luther H. Hekimian had his business as china repairer.[16]

In the field of government service Basdekian seems to have started with the Navy yard as a mechanic. Another Armenian from Egypt, who came with his family, got a job with the Post Office. Aram Keram Diran Minassian came at the outbreak of the Spanish-American war as interpreter for one of the branches of the secret service of the United States. He is said to have spoken with perfect ease nine or more languages, and to have played a very important part in winning

[14] Bakshian started at 1412 H Street, N.W.; Uncababian at 508 11th Street, N.W. Bakshian's business soon came to be known as The Oriental Process Rug Repairing and Cleaning Company. *Washington City Directory*, 1904 and following years.
[15] *Washington City Directory*, 1909.
[16] *Ibid.*, 1909, 1910. Luther was a nephew of Nejib Hekimian. He was killed during the last war in Turkey.

that war. He also ran a detective agency at 920 F Street, N. W. It was advertised as "Aram's Private Detective Agency," where "nine languages [were] spoken."[17]

*Growth of the Community*

Despite the many Armenians who came to Washington between 1890 and 1910, an Armenian community life did not develop in the city until the last world war. The reason is that many of those who came did not stay. Washington did not have much to offer to recent immigrants. It was a city of civil servants and possessed many of the characteristics of a university town. Varzhabedian left the city around 1899. Garabedian died a bachelor. Arthur Edmund Crew left around 1900 to continue his study of art in New York City. Malkhas left for Europe in February 1903 when a physician mis-diagnosed him as a tubercular case. His brother, Armen, left the city around the same time. Nazar was called to Ellis Island to become an interpreter. Minassian similarly had left Washington to become an interpreter at the same place. Moses Hekimian left for Turkey around 1908 for a visit, and decided to stay there because of the anticipated freedoms under the new Turkish constitutional monarchy. Hmayag Loosararian settled in Egypt, where he died.

With the last war Armenians began to come to the city in larger numbers than before. Nejib Hekimian, who by that time had built an enviable rug business, was directly or indirectly instrumental in the coming of a number of them. They came to work for him, and ultimately established rug businesses of their own.

Messrs. Hovsep Soghomonian, Setrag Khosrofian, and somewhat later Khazar Boghosian were similarly instrumental in the coming of a number of Armenians. These men had come during the war and entered the hotel business, the earliest Armenians in the city to do so. Others came either to work for them or to start hotel businesses of their own.

The political developments connected with the establishment and recognition of the Armenian Republic at the end of the last war were instrumental in drawing some more Armenians to Washington. Between 1918 and 1922 a few of these came as representatives of the Armenian people and of the Armenian Republic—among them Professor Der Hagopian and Mihran Sivazlian, members of the Armenian National Council; and Karekin Pasdermajian,[18] the chief of the newly organized Armenian legation. These men did not stay long in Washington, due to the short life of the Armenian Republic and the eventual wrecking of the Armenian question. Nevertheless an event connected with the recognition of the Armenian Republic by the United States government resulted in the settlement of many others. This was the parade of the Armenian veterans in 1922,

[17] *Washington City Directory*, 1899.
[18] Souren Hanessian's uncle.

led by Varaztad Kazanjian. It had been organized by the Armenian National Council for the purpose of expediting the recognition.[19] The veterans came from various parts of the country. Some of them liked the city and determined to make it their home.

The latest and chief influx of Armenians into Washington, however, started shortly before and during the present war. Many of the newcomers are technical, administrative and clerical government employees of various grades. A few have gone into the hotel business.

### *Beginnings of Community Life and Early Organizations*

The social life of the Armenians in Washington started during the last war when twenty or more persons would get together and hold picnics. It was also during this period that the first Armenian organization, the local chapter of the Armenian General Benevolent Union, was formed.

During the first few years which followed the war the social life of the people centered, in one way or another, about the Armenian political issues of the day. Around 1921 an affair was held, probably on the occasion of the visit of General Pakradouni, at which time $1,130.00 were raised for the Army of the Armenian Republic. When General Antranig visited the city a reception was held in his honor at the Lafayette Hotel. The reception was attended by about forty persons; and some $2,000.00 were raised for the relief of the needy in Armenia and Cilicia. The affair is regarded to have been one of the most successful Armenian functions in the city.

The Washington Chapter of the Armenian General Benevolent Union was formed at the close of 1915 when Vahan Kurkjian, the general secretary of the American regional branch of the organization, came to Washington from New York for the purpose. The initial meeting was held in the office of Nejib Hekimian. Officers for the chapter elected, for the period from January 1, 1916 to December 31, 1916, were: Nejib Hekimian, chairman; Onnig Nersessian, treasurer; S. Ichilian, secretary. Mihran Dolmage and Neshan Hintlian were also active. The chapter started with 19 members. At present its membership is 75. Some years ago it organized a junior chapter, which was revived last year.

The next Armenian organization to be found in Washington was the local chapter of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation. It started in 1919 with five persons meeting in the store of Nazaret Caroglanian at 301 I Street, N. W. and

[19] Kazanjian, now the world famous plastic surgeon of Harvard University, had been a high ranking officer in the British Army during the first world war. The parade included many captains and lieutenants in the U.S. Army. Kazanjian read a memorial for the recognition of the Armenian Republic to Secretary Colby on the steps of the State Department building. The recognition came shortly after.

electing John Karibian as chairman, N. Caroglanian as secretary-treasurer, and Sarkis Papazian as adviser. Within the next two years the membership of the chapter grew to seventeen. The establishment of the Armenian Republic about this time does not seem to have had any direct influence on this increase in numbers, but it does seem to have contributed to the enthusiasm of the group. After the fall of the Armenian Republic interest shifted to local matters. Since then the chapter has undergone periodic shifts in interest and enthusiasm—with the settlement of new party members in Washington around 1929; the schism in the Armenian communities in the United States in 1933 and 1934; and the new influx of party members in the city since the beginning of the present war.

### *Women's Organizations*

In 1931 the women became aware of themselves as a factor in the life of the community, and started to organize. In that year Taparagan, who had come to the United States from Bulgaria as a worker of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, visited Washington and formed a local chapter of the Armenian Red Cross. A meeting was held in the home of Mrs. Vartanoush Karibian, which was attended by ten or twelve ladies. A committee was elected with Miss Naomi Yegavian as chair-lady, Mrs. Zepure Hatchikian as secretary, and Mrs. Karibian as treasurer. The chapter seems to have been active since its organization.

During the same year a women's Bible Class was formed under the leadership of Mrs. Baker, formerly a missionary in Turkey, with the Mrs. Vartouhie Hovnanian, Louise Nazarian, Makrouhie Khosrofian, Zvart Cone and some others as members. The class met at the Y.W.C.A., at first once a week, then once a month. As it grew in size attempts were made to change its character from a Bible study group to a sewing circle, and still later to a nationality group of the Y.W.C.A. By this time an executive committee had been elected, consisting of the Mrs. Zvart Cone, president; Louise Nazarian, secretary; Lydia Kasab, treasurer; and possibly one or two others as advisers.

At a meeting of the group in the spring of 1932, where Archbishop Levon Tourian was the guest speaker, the committee was expanded to make it more representative of its enlarged membership. Mrs. Zabelle Mesrobian was one of those then elected. The new committee was short lived, however. The group split between those represented by the original committee and those represented by its later members. The split had a religious cleavage.

The original committee, representing the Protestants, carried on for some years under the leadership of Mrs. Cone. On May 29, 1940 the Varchutune[20] of

[20] Executive body. In this instance the joint meeting of the elders, deacons and trustees of the church.

the Armenian Presbyterian Church delegated Mrs. Ephronia Manookian to bring together the ladies of the church and explore the possibility of organizing a ladies aid society. On July 26 of the same year Reverend Mihran Renjilian, the minister of the church, called a meeting of the ladies at the Y.W.C.A., where an executive committee was elected. The committee consisted of the Mrs. Zvart Cone, president; Helen Anilian, vice-president; Christine Hanessian, secretary; Rose Manoukian, treasurer; Maritza Manougian, Louise Nazarian, and Ephronia Manookian, advisers. At this same meeting the group went on record to be known officially as the "Women's Auxiliary of the Armenian Presbyterian Church." It has come to be known, however, as the Ladies Aid Society of that church. Since its organization in 1940 the society had been connected with the American Red Cross and the Y.W.C.A. It has given bazaars, picnics, dinners, moving pictures, childrens programs, and has made annual contributions to the budget of the church.

The other group, representing the Apostolic Church, elected for their executive committee the Mrs. M. Hintlian, president; Satenig Nersessian, secretary; and Makrouhie Garabedian, treasurer. It elected for president Mrs. Haiganoush Hatzakordzian in 1933 and Mrs. Malvina Boghosian in 1934. Mrs. Boghosian remained in office until November 1939, when an entirely new committee was elected. The members of this committee were: the Mrs. Haiganoush Khosrofian, president; Armenouhie Manoukian, vice-president; Makrouhie Khosrofian, secretary; Anahid Semerjian, treasurer; and Victoria Keshishian, adviser. Since its organization the society conducted a school and has given picnics, dinners, socials, and childrens programs.

### *Churches*

The history of the Armenian churches in Washington starts with 1932. During his visit to the city in the spring of that year Archbishop Tourian organized the first Hokapartzoutune[21] of the Apostolic Church, with John Baldadian, president; H. Karibian, vice-president; Aram Casbarian, secretary; Jacob Tossounian, treasurer; and E. Balian, assistant treasurer.

Prior to the Archbishop's visit church services had been held, perhaps on the average once a year, by clergymen of the Apostolic Church who visited the city to perform baptisms. The first such service was held in September 1923 in the Episcopal church on 12th Street and Massachusetts Avenue, N. W. when the Reverend Yeghishe Kalchinjian baptized the children of the Mr. and Mrs. E. Balian, Sahag Tossounian, O. Nersessian, George Seferian, and possibly others.

[21] Church executive body or board of trustees.

In 1933 the Hokapartzoutune was reorganized as a result of the political and social cleavage among the Armenians in the country at large. During the succeeding years it sponsored about three or four services annually.

In the fall of 1941 the Apostolic Church became more active with the election of a new Hokapartzoutune. Its members were M. Dolmage, chairman; Garabed Hartunian, secretary; Neshan Hintlian, treasurer; Khosrof Khosrofian and Louis Melikian, advisers. Since then it has sponsored on the average seven or eight services a year, held an occasional forum or social, organized a Tbratz Tass,[22] arranged the local David of Sassoon Fund campaign, and given a reception to Archbishop Karekin Hovsepian in connection with the jubilee celebration in his honor in various parts of the country.

The beginnings of the Armenian Presbyterian Church go back to about 1934, when Reverend H. K. Krikorian, who had then recently settled in Washington, aroused the interest of the evangelical Armenians in the city to start religious services. A Varchutune was organized with him as president; Lawrence K. Cone, secretary; Manoug Manoukian, treasurer; and George Nazarian and Jack Kasab, advisers. This body sponsored Sunday evening services at the Y.W.C.A. with Reverend Krikorian as the preacher. The Reverends M. P. Balian, S. M. Rejebian, and Haroutunian, all of Philadelphia, Pa. were also secured as guest preachers on several occasions. The services were discontinued when Reverend Krikorian left the city some time later. On his return the previous Varchutune was revived and religious services were once more commenced at the Y.W.C.A. This second attempt failed, however, due to insufficient interest on the part of the people.

The beginning of the present organization of the Armenian Presbyterian Church goes back to the fall of 1938 when Reverend Neshan Khatchadoorian of Providence, R. I. visited the city for a few days with the intention of exploring the possibilities of starting an evangelical church. After conferring with Reverend Krikorian and several other persons a meeting was held at the Y.W.C.A. on September 25, 1938, which was attended by 19 individuals. A temporary committee was organized, consisting of Mark Keshishian, president; Lawrence K. Cone, secretary; Hrandt Norair, treasurer; Jacob H. Poladian, Mrs. V. Hovnanian, and George Nazarian, advisers. The committee was to look into the possibility of starting a church and securing a minister to that end. It set to work at once, and by April 1st of the following year succeeded in bringing Reverend Khatchadoorian, who thus became the first full time religious and community worker among the Armenians in Washington. With July 1st, 1939 the congregation began to have regular Sunday services.

In March 1940 Mihran Renjilian succeeded Reverend Khatchadoorian, whose resignation from his charge had been accepted about two months earlier.

[22] Choir of the Armenian Apostolic Church.

Mr. Renjilian had recently come from Greece, where he had studied theology and served as pastor. While in Washington, on May 21, 1940, he was ordained into the ministry of the Presbyterian Church, U. S. A. During his ministry, on May 3, 1940 the congregation was organized into a Presbyterian church and with 48 charter members was admitted into the Presbytery of Washington City. On this same occasion also were elected and ordained Mark Keshishian, L. K. Cone, and Levon Tourian as elders; Jacob Kasab, Stephen Topalian and Mrs. Ephronia Manookian as deacons. George Nazarian, Hrandt Norair and Jacob Poladian, together with the elders and deacons, were elected and approved as trustees.

In September 1941, Reverend Renjilian resigned from his charge to become the pastor of the Armenian Congregational Church in Troy, N. Y. He was succeeded in February, 1942 by the present pastor. At present the budget of the church is over four and a half times that of 1939, when the present church started. Since then, also, a real fellowship has developed within the membership of the church. In addition to its Sunday morning services, the church holds monthly forums on general subjects, publishes a weekly bulletin of community-wide interest, fosters programs with a view to bring young people together, and attempts to minister to the spiritual and social needs of the people.

*Schools*

Washington Armenians have also taken some interest in the education of their children in the language of their forefathers. The earliest teacher in this field was probably Mrs. Haiganoush Khosrofian, who for a brief period in 1932 seems to have taught elementary Armenian to several children. Soon after the Hokapartzoutune of the Apostolic Church started an Armenian school with Garabed Hartunian as the teacher. The class met in the parish house of St. John's Church on Sundays from 12:00 noon to 2:00 P.M. Before the year was over the Ladies Aid Society of that church took the school over. For the remainder of the year and in 1933 Vahram Kavaldjian was the teacher. After that year the project was abandoned. The reason seems to have been insufficient cooperation on the part of the parents. At one time the sponsors of the school even hired taxis for the transportation of the children.

In November 1939 the Ladies Aid Society of the Apostolic Church started another school with Enoch Lachinian as the teacher. The classes were held once a week for two hours at the Y.W.C.A. on 17th and K Streets, N. W. Lachinian, who was a student at Georgetown University at the time, was unable to continue as teacher after April 1941 due to the pressure of his studies. Mrs. Makrouhie Khosrofian took his place until the end of that year, after which the project was

abandoned once more. Since then other efforts have been made to start a school, but have not met with success. The reasons are the geographical distances between families and insufficient interest on the part of both parents and children.

### *The Present and the Future*

The Armenian community in Washington is unique. It has a large number of professional and clerical men and women on a per capita basis than is the case elsewhere. It has a large number of businessmen who are mainly in the rug or hotel business. It has practically no laboring class. The economic and social life of the city with its civil servants, lack of industries, congested population, beautiful homes and social aspirants has defined the occupational bounds of the community.

The new generation of Armenian Americans in Washington is mainly of teen age. The reason is that the bulk of the settlement in the city took place within the past fifteen years by young people and young families. The future of that generation will not be much different than what has happened to most first and second generation Americans. Some of the young people have already married Americans of non-Armenian parentage. Many of them are achieving outstanding success in school and at work. Every year we have instances of children and young people from the elementary grades up to the university who win honors, prizes, and scholarships. The fortunes of the children of Boghos Casbarian,[23] who are native Washingtonians, are typical of the place our young people are making in the world. The daughter married an engineer. James is a bank president. Harvey was bursar of the University of Maryland for many years and is now the head of a business school in Baltimore. Vartan holds a responsible position in the Navy Department.

At present there are about two hundred Armenian families in Washington. The total number of Armenians is probably over a thousand. The number is still increasing. It is not likely, however, that any influx of Armenians into the city in the future will change the present trends of the community, since it is doubtful that there will be any significant Armenian immigration into the United States after the present war.

[23] *Supra, pp. 9-10*



# Armenian Presbyterian Church

Washington, D. C.

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*—The Golden Rule.*

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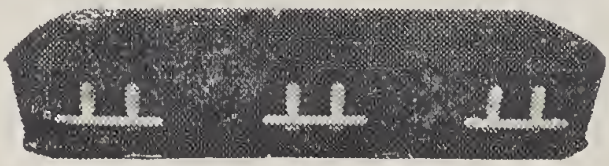


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Avedis Sohigian
Victor Sohigian

# A Brief History of the Armenian Community in Richmond, Va.

The first Armenian known to have settled in Richmond, Virginia was Harootune Darhanian. He came in 1895 from New York, with the intention of eventually returning to his native land. During 1897 and 1898 four other Armenians settled in the city. They were Nishan and Kapriel Darhanian, Avedis Zartarian, and Manuel Vranian. They came with the same intention and therefore without their families. In time other Armenians followed, some of them with their families, so that by 1919 we find an Armenian community of about 250 persons in Richmond.

The early settlers did not have an easy time making a living. The first five persons named above started in the fruit business. Nishan Darhanian, Manuel Vranian and some others at one time also tried their hand in a moving picture venture. For many years they did not make more than a bare living.

After 1907 the economic condition of the Armenians in Richmond improved, and some of them achieved noticeable success in business. Nevertheless, all new comers seem to have gone through an initial period of striving for a living. Some of them engaged in more than one business venture before they found their place in the economic life of the community.

The case of Manouk Baronian may not be typical at all points, but it indicates the hardships Armenians underwent in the early years of their settlement. He informs that he came to the United States in 1890 from Guerune, Turkey and settled in New York. In or about 1912 he became dissatisfied with conditions there and cast about for better opportunities for a livelihood. Hearing that Armenians in Richmond were doing well he made a trip there, and was convinced that that was where he should settle. His first job was with the J. Thompson Brown Co. as janitor. Later he opened a lunch counter in the McGuire School; then became a vender in the park; and finally, about twenty years ago, opened a confectionary store in which business he has been ever since.

The first Armenian organized body in Richmond was the Board of Trustees of the Armenian Apostolic Church. It has been sponsoring religious services in St. Paul's Episcopal Church periodically for the past 38 years. The Prelacy in New York has been sending a cleric several times a year to conduct the services.

The Richmond chapter of the Armenian General Benevolent Union started in 1912 with ten members, under the initiative of Mr. Manoug Kambourian, now deceased. It was not until after 1914, however, that the chapter became really

active. At one time its membership reached 85, and included all the members of some families. For many years it evoked the loyalty and active support of all Armenians of whatever party, creed or opinion.

The great depression of 1929 deprived this chapter of many members, who found it impossible to pay their dues. Toward the end of 1933 and early in 1934 the chapter lost some more members due to the schism in Armenian circles throughout the country. The result was that it dwindled to a membership of fourteen, which carried the load of the organization until 1942. Since then it has increased to thirty and there are hopes that it will soon reach to fifty. There is no doubt that the Richmond chapter of the Benevolent Union has played an important part in the life of the Armenian community there through its public meetings and social functions.

The Richmond chapter of the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party was organized in 1915 under the initiative of Mr. Shavarsh Hovnanian, now deceased. Later it merged with the Reconstituted Hunchakian Party. The merger gave the new chapter a membership of eighteen. During and since the last war it made distinct contributions to the life of the Armenian community in Richmond. It is the only Armenian political organization there which was spared dissolution since its origin.

At present there are close to 120 Armenian families in Richmond. The total number of Armenians in the city is well over 500. Practically all the children and young people are American born. Many of them have gone through the twelve grades of the local public schools, and some of them have graduated from colleges, professional schools, and universities. Over thirty of the young people are already in the service. Lately in American and Armenian nation-wide fund raising campaigns the Armenians in Richmond have done very well on the basis of per capita giving.

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— *Numbers* 6:24-26.